



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

### AGENDA ITEM

**DATE:** May 5, 2021

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

**SUBJECT: DEPARTMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

#### OVERVIEW

Sustainability emerged in the late 20th century as a way of conceptualizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of global environmental, social, and economic crises. The United Nation's 1987 'Our Common Future' Report (often called the Brundtland Report from Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chair of the reporting commission) defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The Report, and decades of subsequent elaboration, have situated our environmental crises within the context of social and economic relationships of deep inequality and unequal access to rights, resources, markets, and institutions.

Given its holistic framing of environmental, social, and economic crises, sustainability policy involves a wide variety of cross-cutting analyses and priorities including, but not limited to, the transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy production, investment in mass transit and mode shift from internal combustion personal transport, environmental justice, habitat protection, preservation of biodiversity, protection of our oceans and coastlines, access to parks and open space, waste reduction, reduction of the carbon intensity of food production and distribution, climate resilience, equitable access to social institutions, political decision-making, and the opportunity to sustain oneself and one's family in health, security, and dignity.

Bringing the region as a whole into alignment with principles of sustainability is thus a complex, costly, and multi-decadal process. It will necessarily involve substantial changes to land use, energy production, transmission, and distribution, housing design and construction, and many other aspects of social and economic life. The elements of the County that are under direct purview of the County Administration—including facilities, staff, organization, day to day operations, policies, and processes—are, however, the most accessible means available to us to effect the transformation of our region.

Ensuring the sustainability of the County's own departments has multiple direct benefits to our larger efforts to increase the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of our region, including 1) achieving rapid, significant greenhouse gas emission reductions, habitat preservation, and other social and economic benefits by ensuring that the County's 18,000 employees are

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working in ways and in facilities that maximize the sustainability of their work, 2) signaling to the private sector the kinds of funding and policy priorities that the County is likely to favor in the future, 3) incubating sustainability-advancing strategies, institutions, and relationships that can be adapted and adopted by the private sector and society at large, and 4) providing leadership to diverse organizations and communities committed to transforming regional social, economic, and ecological systems.

The County of San Diego has adopted a wide variety of sustainability-supportive plans and programs, including the Zero Net Energy Portfolio Plan, Guidance on Green Infrastructure, Electric Vehicle Roadmap, Active Transportation Plan, Strategic Plan to Reduce Waste, Borrego Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan, 2011 General Plan, 2018 Climate Action Plan, Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program, and South County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Plan. Each of these have been designed, implemented, and administered by multiple County Departments, including Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Agriculture, Weights & Measures, Planning and Development Services, Environmental Health and Quality, Purchasing and Contracting, General Services, Real Estate Services, and the County Fire Authority.

The Climate Action planning process, with its constituent measures, has provided the impetus for streamlining many of these efforts. This Board letter aims to further enhance this long-term planning by directing a uniform, enterprise-wide process of assessing sustainability on a department-by-department basis and drafting specific but interdependent plans for bringing departments into alignment with County sustainability goals. To develop this plan, departments are asked to reevaluate day to day operations and propose innovative ways to become more sustainable.

This letter therefore instructs the Chief Administrative Office to direct all County departments and programs to develop Department Sustainability Plans in collaboration with a consultancy experienced in sustainability and sustainability planning, to assign an appropriate member of each department to serve as a liaison with retained consultancy and assume responsibility for the coordination and completion of the respective Department Sustainability Plan, to return to the Board within 6 months with completed plans for Board approval, and to report back to the Board on an annual basis to demonstrate the progress towards achieving sustainability in County facilities and operations.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**VICE CHAIR NORA VARGAS AND SUPERVISOR TERRA LAWSON-REMER**

1. Find that the proposed project (the direction to staff in this letter) is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines section 15060(c)(3) and 15378(b)(5).
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to:
  - a. Direct all County Departments and programs to develop and implement sustainability (as defined above) plans. Each plan should assess existing sustainability practices and identify new opportunities in all aspects of internal and external facing operations, existing policies, programs, and practices and must aim to create comprehensive strategies to achieve sustainability. This should include an

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assessment of environmental justice components applicable to their work in coordination with the Director of the Office of Equity and Racial Justice (OERJ). This assessment would serve as the baseline and help measure progress as the Departmental Sustainability Plan is developed.

- b. Assign an appropriate member of each department to serve as a liaison with retained consultancy and to assume responsibility for the coordination and completion of the respective Department Sustainability Plan. Report back to the Board of Supervisors regularly with progress reports and return within 6 months with final Departmental Sustainability Plans.
  - c. Report back on an annual basis to demonstrate the progress towards achieving sustainability in County facilities and operations.
3. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code, authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting to issue a competitive solicitation or solicitations for sustainability consultancy services to support County staff's development of sustainability plans and, upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award a contract or contracts and amend the contract(s) as needed to reflect changes to services and funding.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The fiscal impact is anticipated to be minimal. If any additional staffing is required, the Land Use and Environment Group Executive Office will return to the Board. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

N/A

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

The origins of sustainability as a way of conceptualizing the human relationship with our environment and with one another lie in the last third of the 20th Century, when societies across the globe began to reckon with a dizzying array of vast, interconnected tragedies of the commons, as resources and sinks once considered inexhaustible abruptly reached their natural limits under the burden of mass human consumption, destruction, and pollution: the depletion of the ozone layer, nuclear disaster, smog, acid rain, chemical pollution of rivers, streams, and lakes, ocean acidification, coral bleaching, ocean accumulation of plastics, decline of migratory birds, dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane (DDT)-related collapse of songbird and raptor populations, spread of plant pathogens like Dutch Elm Disease and Chestnut Blight (which drove the 4 billion-strong American Chestnut to the brink of extinction, where it remains), collapse of iconic fisheries like northwest cod, jack mackerel, flounder, pacific sardine, and abalone, precipitous global decline of bellwether orders like amphibians and bats, near-complete felling of old-growth forests in Europe and North America, accelerating loss of tropical forests, and, the mother of all tragedies of the global commons, greenhouse gas pollution and the climate emergency.

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ALL)**

Although sustainability emerged initially in response to these ecological crises, the United Nation's paradigm-defining 1987 Brundtland report ('Our Common Future'), proved a fulcrum which turned sustainability deep into the territory of social and economic equity, identifying the origin of these ecological crises in dramatic imbalances, inequalities, and inequities in human societies and economies.

Given its holistic framing of environmental, social, and economic crises, sustainability policy involves a wide variety cross-cutting analyses and priorities including, but not limited to, the transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy production, investment in mass transit and mode shift from internal combustion personal transport, environmental justice, habitat protection, preservation of biodiversity, protection of our oceans and coastlines, access to parks and open space, waste reduction, reduction of the carbon intensity of food production and distribution, climate resilience, equitable access to social institutions, political decision-making, and the opportunity to sustain oneself and one's family in health, security, and dignity.

Given this breadth of analysis and engagement, elected officials and administrators have tried in various ways to integrate sustainability into public policy and administration. The establishment in 1996-97 of San Francisco's pioneering Department of the Environment and inaugural Sustainability Plan was landmark in the integration of sustainability into municipal governance. In the subsequent two decades, jurisdictions across the state, country, and world have made their own institutional attempts to plan for sustainability.

The County of San Diego has adopted a wide variety of sustainability-supportive plans and programs, including the Zero Net Energy Portfolio Plan, Guidance on Green Infrastructure, Electric Vehicle Roadmap, Active Transportation Plan, Strategic Plan to Reduce Waste, Borrego Valley Groundwater Sustainability Plan, 2011 General Plan, 2018 Climate Action Plan, Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Program, and South County Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) Plan. Each of these have been designed, implemented, and administered by multiple County Departments, including Public Works, Parks and Recreation, Agriculture, Weights & Measures, Planning and Development Services, Environmental Health and Quality, Purchasing and Contracting, General Services, Real Estate Services, and the County Fire Authority.

Bringing the region as a whole into alignment with principles of sustainability through these and future initiatives will be a complex, costly, and multi-decadal process. It will necessarily involve substantial changes to land use, energy production, transmission, and distribution, housing design and construction, and many other aspects of social and economic life. The elements of the County that are under direct purview of the County Administration—including facilities, staff, organization, day to day operations, policies, and processes—are, however, the most accessible means available to us to effect the transformation of our region.

Ensuring the sustainability of the County's own departments has multiple direct benefits to our larger efforts to increase the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of our region, including 1) achieving rapid, significant GHG emissions reductions, habitat preservation, and other social and economic benefits by ensuring that the County's 18,000 employees are working in ways and in facilities that maximize the sustainability of their work, 2) signaling to the private

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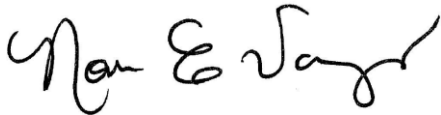
sector the kinds of funding and policy priorities that the County is likely to favor in the future, 3) incubating sustainability-advancing strategies, institutions, and relationships that can be adapted and adopted by the private and society at large, and 4) providing leadership to diverse organizations and communities committed to transforming regional social, economic, and ecological systems.

To date, The Climate Action planning process, with its constituent measures, has provided the impetus for streamlining many of these efforts. This Board letter aims to further enhance this long term planning by directing a uniform, enterprise-wide process of assessing sustainability on a department-by-department basis and drafting specific but interdependent plans for bringing departments into alignment with County sustainability goals.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed action supports the County of San Diego's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan's Sustainable Environments/Thriving Initiative through achieving sustainability across all County facilities and operations.

Respectfully submitted,



VICE CHAIR NORA VARGAS  
Supervisor, 1st District



TERRA LAWSON-REMER  
Supervisor, 3rd District

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**REQUIRES FOUR VOTES:**       Yes     No

**WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED**

Yes     No

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:**

January 27, 2021 (3), directed the development for a regional zero carbon sustainability plan in partnership with the University of California San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy to achieve zero carbon in the region by 2035.

**BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:**

N/A

**BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:**

N/A

**MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:**

N/A

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):**

N/A

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** Districts Three and One

**OTHER CONCURRENCE(S):**    N/A

**CONTACT PERSON(S):**

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